

Missy: I'll Take WCW to the Mat

Melissa Hyatt Gilbert is without a wrestling job. Melissa Hyatt is angry. When that anger explodes, one can brace for a verbal melee on the level of a Sid Vicious vs. Arn Anderson brawl in an English inn.

Last Tuesday and Wednesday, Missy's anger at her contract not being renewed by World Championship Wrestling spilled into the offices of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Atlanta's WXIA-TV, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The Associated Press* and the *Rush Limbaugh Show*.

Missy filed a formal complaint with the Atlanta office of the EEOC, charging World Championship Wrestling with sexual harassment and sex discrimination. Her Atlanta attorney, Allison Baum, approved Missy in taking her case to the media at midweek.

Wednesday night (Mar. 30), Hyatt went public on the Atlanta NBC affiliate's *11 News*. In a two-and-a-half minute story, reporter Paul Crawley detailed the saga of Missy's departure from WCW and her intent to press legally her allegations of harassment and discrimination against her former employer.

"Everything in professional wrestling is fabricated," said Hyatt in the opening moments of the WXIA story. "Missy Hyatt's character was always the blonde bimbo type and when the cameras cut, that's not me. I'm a real person inside."

Hyatt lapsed into tears as she detailed her charges of fondling and verbal harassment. "They would grab me, touch me, ask me out for dates, always...I had one of my supervisors always calling me at night and saying, 'What I do for you, you know. come over here and take care of me and things,'" Hyatt told Crawley.

Then, Missy focused on the cornerstone of her charges: a picture in which one of her breasts is accidentally exposed. Hyatt accuses an unnamed WCW employee of duplicating the picture and posting it in a TBS production truck and in offices in WCW's CNN Center complex. "I just ripped it down and I didn't know what to do," said Hyatt. "I was really in shock, if anything, and they (WCW) didn't do anything about it."

Hyatt contends she has tapes and witnesses which will support her charges, though no specific names were mentioned during the broadcast. Her attorney agrees. "She is an individual, she is a person, she had a right to be treated with respect," said Baum, "and not subjected to the visual, physical, and verbal abuse that she was."

Crawley and a camera crew followed Hyatt in front of Atlanta's Center Stage, taping locale for WCW last Wednesday night, as she drove up to say goodbye to gathered fans. Hyatt was leaving to move to New York, where she has announced plans to study acting. Some of the fans Crawley interviewed were unaware Hyatt's contract had not been renewed. One female fan said, "She is a bimbo....so???" A male fan said he hopes Missy sues WCW "because she deserves everything she can get."

As of deadline, World Championship Wrestling had not made any public response, with one company spokesman saying WCW "will have no comment until it actually sees the complaint."

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Matwatch
'94

Steve

Beverly

From personal experience, I can tell you of the wrath of Melissa Hyatt.

If you have a copy of *Matwatch: the Final Chapter*, our annual which reviewed the four years of our original newsletter, reread some of the passages on Missy.

I know firsthand how she reacted when I merely reported what WXIA-TV and E! The Entertainment Channel were disclosing about her relationship with that Academy Award-winner Jason Hervey.

She left a message on my answering machine: "I'm gonna go tell somebody. I'm gonna go tell Mr. (Jim) Herd and get you off the (WCW) hotline." She failed but she did try.

That "I'm gonna go tell somebody" remark came back to mind when I heard Missy say last week on WXIA-TV the character of Missy Hyatt was totally different from the "real person" Missy Hyatt. Remember how Missy used to say she was going to go "tell somebody" when she'd be run out of the dressing room by Stan Hansen on those awful pay-per-view features?

When she read the Hervey story in the final annual, she whined to then-WCW chief Kip Frey, who decided to fire me from the hotline, but whom was fired himself before he could dump me.

In my first *Matwatch* annual, in a profile of her then-husband Eddie Gilbert as Man of the Year, I wrote, "He has a gorgeous wife who wants to be a star." Missy was so insulted at the "star" wish reference, she wouldn't let Eddie subscribe to my newsletter for three months.

And these things were small potatoes.

So, it came as no surprise when Missy decided to go the payback route when Eric Bischoff did not renew her contract and did so abruptly reportedly during a party at the most recent WCW tapings in Florida.

Missy will go for the last word, even if she embarrasses herself in the process.

This newsletter has perpetually taken a stand against pro wrestling's abuse and unflattering portrayal of women. But personalities aside, let's examine Missy's allegations and a major issue at stake here---personal credibility.

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Steve Beverly (Continued from Page 1)

First, Missy is charging sexual harassment. Publicly, what she states is she was fondled and sexually-suggestive remarks were made to her by co-workers. She says a supervisor, whom she did not name on WXIA-TV, attempted to court sexual favors in exchange for what he had professionally done for her.

Several issues come into play here. As a former operations manager of a television station, I was required to be well-informed on current sexual harassment laws. I now teach them in a broadcasting sales and management course at Union University. Existing law places the burden of proof on the employee. Both acts Missy is charging are illegal in a public workplace; the latter, involving the supervisor, does not have to be specifically stated as a requirement for hiring or retained employment. Even the mere implication of a sex-for-employment status trade is illegal for both the individual and the corporation, no matter the circumstances or the condition of the accused. However, an opposing attorney and a court of law will examine to what extent a woman goes to attempt to stop the harassment while she is employed.

"Again, the burden of proof is on the employee," says attorney Ivy Scarborough. "While an accusation may be enough to create embarrassment for a party, a jury will be asked to consider only outright proof. A party could suggest being too fearful of job loss but a jury will have to consider to what degree the party tried to resist."

Consider the other allegations:

*****SEX DISCRIMINATION:** Among Missy's complaints in this category is she was paid lower than any other individual classified as an announcer. Past history indicates the EEOC and a court will look at experience level, overall qualifications, and comparisons to others within the company at the same level. Actual talent does not factor, as long as the person is employed by a company.

Personal opinion: she has little to stand on here. Missy was not hired as a broadcaster and it was not her primary role in this company. Plus, Kip Frey, in his short tenure as WCW chief, reportedly guaranteed Missy a percentage of her WCW Hotline revenues; however, Missy has denied receiving the amount of money estimated in published reports.

*****POSTING OF A PARTIALLY NUDE PHOTO IN WCW OFFICES AND/OR PRODUCTION TRUCK:** If she has the proof she indicates, the EEOC will nail the company to the wall on a sexual harassment count. As long as Missy in no way deliberately contributed to the display of the photo, this leaves the company vulnerable for damages and the responsible employee(s) at risk for a civil suit, damages, and dismissal.

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Missy vs. WCW

(Continued from Page 1)

Hyatt's contract was not renewed by WCW senior vice president Eric Bischoff, reportedly at a cocktail party involving WCW and Disney-MGM personnel at the February WCW Worldwide tapings in Orlando. Observers say Bischoff told Hyatt she was not being renewed after Hyatt allegedly went over Bischoff's head to WCW president Bill Shaw and executive vice president Bob Dhue to negotiate.

Before filing the complaint with the EEOC, Hyatt's attorneys confronted WCW officials with the allegation of the nude photo. Insiders close to the situation indicate WCW personnel refused to discuss the matter.

In the WXIA story, Crawley reported Hyatt intends to sue both WCW and parent company Turner Broadcasting if they do not respond to her EEOC complaint. However, other media outlets have omitted that issue as a number of newspaper and broadcast chains have policies not to report threats of lawsuits, only filed legal actions. "We have a firm policy against reporting threats," says Richard Hyatt (no relation to Missy), senior writer for *The Columbus Ledger-Enquirer* in Georgia. "We've had too many people use the media as a conduit to hold a company hostage for money without ever filing any legal action. We just won't report a threat, even if it's a legit case and every other paper in the country reports it."

The story was picked up by The Associated Press Wednesday night and followed by extensive coverage Thursday in the Cox-owned *Journal-Constitution*.

Limbaugh commented on the situation in the first 15 minutes of his top-rated syndicated radio show Thursday on more than 620 stations. "She's probably got a complaint," said Limbaugh. "But there's this little thing about the territory. You know what you're getting into when you get into that game." (See page 3 for more in related story).

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WXIA-TV on Missy

The following is a transcript of the March 30 story on WXIA-TV's 6:00 news hour in Atlanta concerning the Missy Hyatt EEOC complaint against WCW. Reprint permission has been granted by WXIA assignment editor Cal Callaway.

MISSY: Everything in professional wrestling is completely fabricated.

(Scenes of Flair vs. Vader)

MISSY: Missy Hyatt's character was always the blonde bimbo type. But when the cameras cut, that's not me. I'm a real person inside.

PAUL CRAWLEY (Reporter): Thirty-year-old Missy Hyatt claims she's about to bodyslam professional wrestling. After ten years as a manager and TV announcer, the first Lady of World Championship Wrestling has filed a sexual harassment and discrimination complaint and plans to sue WCW and its parent company, Turner Broadcasting. She claims she was fired last month because she refused co-workers' sexual advances.

MISSY: They would grab me, touch me, ask me out for dates. I had one of my supervisors always calling me at night saying, 'What I do for you, you know, come over here and take care of me.'"

CRAWLEY: Hyatt also claims a photo showing one of her breasts, accidentally exposed, was publicly displayed in a TBS office.

MISSY (In Tears): I just ripped it down and I didn't know what to do. I was really in shock, if anything. And they didn't do anything about it.

CRAWLEY: Hyatt's lawyers claim to have tapes and witnesses to back the harassment charges.

ALLISON BAUM (Missy's Lawyer): She is an individual. She is a person. She has a right to be treated with respect and not subjected to the visual, physical, and verbal abuse that she was.

CRAWLEY: Many fans in line for tonight's WCW taping session didn't even know Missy had been fired...and they had varying opinions about it.

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Missy Slams WCW

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Hyatt's story was distributed to the network's affiliates Wednesday night via the NBC News Channel feed. Insiders say Hyatt, as of deadline, has contacted both *USA Today* (which, along with WXIA, is owned by Gannett) and *Entertainment Tonight* with offers to tell her story and will seek to go the syndicated talk show route if WCW does not settle the case. Hyatt has also talked with several wrestling newsletter editors and syndicated newspaper columnists concerning the case.

Crawley indicated in a post-story exchange with anchor Angela Robinson of Hyatt's contention other female employees of WCW are considering filing their own complaints against the company. However, no specific names were mentioned.

Insiders at WXIA say Hyatt also discussed steroid use within WCW, the effect of wrestling on her marriage to Eddie Gilbert and assorted additional complaints about the industry—but none of the information was aired because it does not relate to her specific EEOC complaint. WXIA news executives say they plan no further stories until either WCW publicly responds or Hyatt files a lawsuit.

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Further, if—as Missy claims—she reported the photo display to her superiors and they, as she contends, "did nothing about it," those superiors could be subject to a fine and disciplinary action from the EEOC. If an EEOC hearing on the claim is in her favor, those bosses could also be subject to a civil suit.

Personal opinion: this is the issue in which Missy has TBS in jeopardy. Never mind how many times she has previously appeared on television in states of near-undress, the law is clear on cases in which an employee is subjected to potential embarrassment for such an in-house display in the workplace.

*****SHE WAS FIRED FOR REFUSING A CO-WORKER'S SEXUAL DEMANDS:** This was another focal point of the WXIA story. Left unclear is to whom Missy is referring; however, this is where her burden of proof will be difficult. Unless the person who fired her is the co-worker in question, she will find it legally improbable to directly link her firing to sexual demands.

Personal opinion: Missy gets nowhere with this one unless she has the comments on tape or witnesses to them. Plus, Missy was under a no-option contract. WCW was under no obligation to rehire her when her previous deal expired and, under contract law, failure to renew a contract does not constitute a firing, even though media often equates non-renewals with firings.

Realistically, I have mixed feelings concerning this case. I have not been a fan of the character of Missy Hyatt because it indeed has been an insult to the progress women have made in the last 20 years as respectable and equal members of the workplace. That is not a feminist view because many of the key feminist interest groups in America, in my view, are strictly attention-grabbers and fundraisers with an out-of-whack view of society, in general. This is strictly an equality view which suggests women are every bit the equal of men in capabilities and achievement potential without sex or sexuality being a factor. Missy spilling out of a dress on Sunday afternoons or in pay-per-views does anything but enhance that image.

However, I firmly believe Missy Hyatt has, whatever her motives, raised an issue long known within the wrestling industry and its most ardent followers. The business is an Old Boy Network, where women are nothing but objects to appeal to the prurient interests of males. Was there any other reason for the Missy-Madusa Miceli bikini contest of two years ago?

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Ironically, the allegations only five weeks after Hyatt received arguably her most prominent mainline national exposure on the syndicated *Vicki* series with Vicki Lawrence. Some programs already taped with Hyatt accompanying the Nasty Boys have continued to air even within the past two weeks.

Hyatt had been with WCW since early 1989, when she returned as manager of her then-husband Eddie Gilbert and the First Family of Wrestling. In the years since her 1990 divorce from Gilbert, she was used primarily as a studio co-host of *WCW Main Event*, emceeing a studio segment ("Missy Does Mail") on the former *WCW Power Hour* and fronting a popular Sunday night segment on the *WCW Hotline*.

"Missy Hyatt's character was always the blonde bimbo type and when the cameras cut, that's not me. I'm a real person inside."
---Missy Hyatt

More WXIA Story

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MELISSA SMITH (Wrestling Fan): She acts like a bimbo, so what can I say?

K.J. WOOLINE (Wrestling Fan): If this did happen, I think she should sue. She deserves everything she gets.

CRAWLEY: As we were interviewing those fans, Missy Hyatt drove up to say goodbye. She's headed for New York, where she says she'll pursue a real acting career.

MISSY (In Car): Anyway, I've gotta go.

UNNAMED FAN: Why ain't you gonna be with the Nasty Boys no more?

MISSY: I don't knooooooow.

CRAWLEY (In Newsroom): Now, a spokesman for World Championship Wrestling says they have no comment until they actually see the complaint or any lawsuit that will be filed by Missy Hyatt. While she hasn't actually filed one yet, she and her lawyers claim they're taking this one all the way to the mat.

ANGELA ROBINSON (Anchor): Paul, any other women who work with the WCW making any similar complaints?

CRAWLEY: We haven't actually talked to any but both Missy Hyatt and her lawyers claim they have talked to other women who may file lawsuits of their own. So, this could get bigger than just her claim.

Steve Beverly
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Some reporters and columnists have already released names of key people, former and current, in WCW as Missy's targets in the complaint, though neither was named in the EEOC action. As many as a dozen others are being speculated. However, if any of these are publicly named in a lawsuit, they'll have their chances to answer. Missy has told some reporters some sexually-oriented remarks were made to her while these people were inebriated. In my opinion, that's no defense. The only clear defense against any verbal or physical action is not to make it in the first place.

However, Missy has to brace for the potential of her past being hauled before her in court. One question she would face on the picture issue is—are you not the same Missy Hyatt who a few short months ago tangled with WCW over an offer to do a *Playboy* layout and became infuriated when the company denied you permission? If this was such an emotional trauma, why did you continue to take the money and not walk out on the company and go to the media while this was in progress, instead of waiting until your contract was not renewed? Would you have taken this action if you had been retained? That's only a small sample of how the defense attorneys would play the game....but the image of Missy's credibility would be sorely on the line.

Despite my view of Missy's TV character and her past anger at me, I am aware of a side of the woman few people see. None of this is consequential to her case but worth considering. Missy is said to be fiercely loyal and loving to her parents. She also recently was asked to appear on an Atlanta TV show to fulfill a wish for a 13-year-old who is dying of AIDS. Missy not only showed up, she took the kid for a ride in her car. Whenever she is asked to do public appearances with children, she willingly does so, regardless of her TV character's image at the time.

Missy has brought a lot of problems on herself but when she was rumored to be within an eyelash of not being renewed in 1992, I told a well-known insider—without knowing the extent of what we now know—Missy possibly knows enough to bring down the entire WCW organization if the company isn't careful.

Realistically, this case will never go to court and perhaps never even to a formal EEOC hearing. As one former WCW executive has told me, "This company (Turner) writes the checks right and left to avoid legal battles." I firmly predict Turner will settle with Missy, if she does have conclusive proof of her charges. And the Turner boys will be under the gun to clean up their act. But I wonder if it was sexual harassment back in 1989 when, after a bout in which Ric Flair's trunks were pulled low enough to reveal nearly a full moon, a picture of the scene was posted in the Turner office?

The ironic thing: Missy generated more publicity the first day of the story's airing than the entire Sid Vicious-Arn Anderson brawl, in which two men nearly died. That story didn't draw one line of ink or air time in Atlanta. Of course, some of the reaction to Missy's case is humor—but regardless of the source, the charges are to be taken seriously.

Two things will be worth watching: how the male-dominated legion of newsletter subscribers who have frequently ogled Missy for the very reasons about which she now complains will react. Will they be hypocritical enough to be on Missy's side when many of them have watched her strictly for physical attributes?

The other, how will WCW president Bill Shaw react? Will he conduct a full-scale investigation into the conduct of his employees and any current executives named and act responsibly and swiftly....or does he try to wish it away as he appeared to do with the Sid-Arn fracas? Missy Hyatt appears to hold a lot of trump cards. How Shaw responds could be the major key in preserving or tarnishing a visible spoke in the Turner empire.

Rush Addresses Missy's Plight

NEW YORK—Missy Hyatt received an unexpected focus on her sexual harassment charges against World Championship Wrestling last Thursday when nationally syndicated radio host Rush Limbaugh addressed her situation.

"Has anyone here heard of Missy Hyatt?" Limbaugh asked of his staff in the first fifteen minutes of his broadcast. When call screener Bo Snerdley (James Golden) and chief of staff Kit Carson replied no, Limbaugh related meeting Missy at a National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) convention more than a year ago and later receiving a fax and picture from Hyatt, with Missy relating she's a fan of Rush's show.

"Her charging the World Championship Wrestling organization with sexual harassment brings a smile to my face and to some others," said Limbaugh, "because she could say that her entire job is sexual harassment. She could say that the reason she was hired was sexual harassment. She clearly was hired as, partially, as a sex object."

Limbaugh, who has related the conduct of the House of Representatives to professional wrestling, related to listeners what Hyatt's role is as a wrestling manager. "I'm sure she has an engaging personality. She does well on TV, interviews, and this kind of thing. It's all a multi-faceted thing," said Limbaugh.

In a tongue-in-cheek comment, Limbaugh referred to Hyatt's managerial duties. "I'm sure she's got great managing skills. I'm sure she handles all of the accounts of the wrestlers in her tent with great aplomb and great strategy. I'm sure she puts together some fine contracts, and so forth," said Limbaugh.

Rush related the accusation of the partially nude photos which are part of Hyatt's allegations.

"Somebody at World Championship Wrestling took a picture," said Limbaugh, "and plastered copies of the picture all over the offices at World Championship Wrestling...and for this she's suing for sexual harassment. She's probably got a complaint, she does. But there's this little thing about territory. You know what you're getting into when you get into that game (wrestling)."

Limbaugh said "it must be a slow news week" for the news of Hyatt's EEOC complaint to receive prominent play on the national Associated Press wire.

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

Option 1

Meltzer (M-W-F) Beverly (Tu-Sa)
Hudson (Th) Madden (Su)

Option 2

Mooneyham (M) Hudson (Tu)
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HEADLINES

"Thunder" Roars In Early Ratings

NEW YORK—While garnering critical disgust, Hulk Hogan's new *Thunder in Paradise* series is finding favor with viewers in the early going.

Thunder skied to a 6.7 rating and 10 per cent share of audience for its two-hour premiere in national syndication. The ratings include a 9.4 on KCOP in Los Angeles in prime time.

The second episode of *Thunder* held some of its audience in the larger markets, including a 9.1 for a Monday night airing on WWOR in New York.

Hyatt Placed On Hotline Hiatus

FLOURISSANT MO—Missy Hyatt, in the wake of filing a legal complaint against World Championship Wrestling, Inc., has been placed on hiatus by The Real Wrestling Hotline.

Hyatt had joined the hotline in early March after non-renewal of her contract by WCW. But a spokesman for TRWH said, "With Missy becoming a litigant against WCW, we feel it is in the best interest of her and The Real Wrestling Hotline for Missy to remain off the line until this case is settled. Afterward, she has a standing invitation to return."

In a March 24 segment, tapes indicate Hyatt had referred to WCW senior vice president Eric Bischoff as "a liar."

Wrestlemania Buy-Rate Rests at 1.68

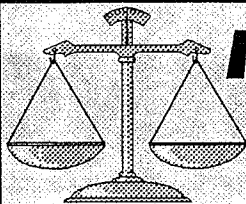
ATLANTA—Cablevision Industries estimates the buy-rate for *Wrestlemania X* at 1.68 per cent, lowest in the history of the event.

Southeastern manager Kim Kersey says an analysis of major cable markets placed the flagship World Wrestling Federation show in an estimated 375,000 homes. Final figures will be available in late May.

If the early estimates hold, the show would gross an estimated \$11.6 million, of which approximately \$6 million would go to WWF parent Titan Sports.

The *Wrestling Observer's* Dave Meltzer reported last week on The Real Wrestling Hotline early predictions of record U.S. gate revenues from the event fell well short.

Some repeat pay-per-view sales may have been hurt by Titan's airing of *Wrestlemania X* in the clear for satellite dish owners on Telstar 401 from 5:30-8:30 p.m. during the evening of Mar. 23. Pay-cable services were repeating the show through Mar. 30.



MATWATCH '94 EDITORIALS

TIME FOR ACTION

Say what you will about the television character of Missy Hyatt or anything you may have heard or know about her private life. But the questions and allegations Missy has raised about the World Championship Wrestling organization have to be taken seriously, if Missy has the proof she claims.

At first glance, one has to ask why Hyatt failed to put a stop to the alleged sexual harassment long before the expiration of her two-year contract this spring. Further, one could easily ask if Hyatt would have raised the charges had WCW senior vice president Eric Bischoff not refused to renew her contract, a renewal Hyatt indicates she was assured. Only Hyatt knows those answers.

What is important, first and foremost, is Missy's charges—at this point—are strictly allegations, under the law. No organization or individual has been indicted, tried, or convicted. However, allegations of this import cannot be shrugged away as insignificant because they involve the wrestling industry or Missy Hyatt—whose mat image has been a living display of the import of which she now complains.

Matwatch '94 places a large part of the onus in responding to this situation on World Championship Wrestling president Bill Shaw. In his tenure, Mr. Shaw has seen a marked upturn in television ratings and acquisitions of the most prominent ring and commentator talent in the industry of the past ten years. However, the Shaw regime has also been marked by excessive sexual and violent content in programs, less than candid or specific details on WCW's handling of steroids or steroid testing, a near-fatal brawl between two prominent wrestlers which was handled from a public relations standpoint with the aplomb of an on-air angle and now the Hyatt allegations.

The time has come for Bill Shaw to take clear and decisive action. That means more than the act of writing a settlement check to Hyatt. When the EEOC complaint is received in Turner Broadcasting System headquarters, Shaw should immediately direct corporate attorneys to conduct an internal investigation into every one of Hyatt's charges. Of immediate import: what employee or employees were responsible for the posting of nude photos of Hyatt in offices. That person or persons should immediately be dismissed. Further, if Hyatt indeed took the matter to a supervisor and the supervisor refused to take any action, that supervisor should be summarily dismissed. If an investigation proves Hyatt is exaggerating, then her credibility will be diluted, plain and simple. Every successive charge should be properly considered in an internal investigation. WCW and TBS should have nothing to fear from the truth, in this case.

Further, a WCW manual on sexual harassment laws should be prepared and distributed to every employee of the company, wrestler or otherwise, with a clear message that violation of such will result in dismissal. Most responsible companies are now developing such with their employees. If the employees choose to ignore such policies, they do so at their employment risk.

A final admonishment is directed to the mat media. This case has already opened the floodgates to people racing to name names and detail specifics, some of which have been in advance of any actual lawsuit being filed.

This is the kind of case where media members will be quick to choose up sides and because, ironically, of the nature of her television character and her past accessibility to the media, many will be quick to side with Missy. Some commentators have already carved up personalities allegedly a target of Hyatt's accusations without providing a fair opportunity to respond.

Important for the media is to remind itself accusations are not the equivalent of an indictment, trial, or conviction. If proof exists of the activities of current and former WCW employees, as Hyatt has suggested, and such proof is admitted into a legal medium, lives and careers will be justifiably damaged. Assorted people will pay serious consequences. But people so accused are equally as entitled to defend themselves as Missy Hyatt is to raise the allegations. To raise questions, even in the area of opinion, without giving an accused party an opportunity to respond, is a clear violation of the media ethic of fairness.

Matwatch '94 calls for a thorough investigation into Hyatt's charges and specific steps from TBS for positive change, if the charges are true. We further call on the media, in its reporting, to guard against the contemporary tabloid mentality of trial-by-accusation. Flawed as it is, we still have a legal process which is designed to bring guilty parties to their knees.

THE RATINGS PAGE

CABLE WRESTLING RATINGS

Feb. Averages Rating/Share Total Homes Jan. Avg.

Monday Night Raw	2.9/4.2	1.83 million	3.3/4.8
WCW Sat. Night	2.6/5.0	1.61 million	2.4/4.6
WWF All-American	2.2/5.4	1.37 million	2.1/4.9
WCW Main Event	2.2/3.8	1.34 million	1.8/2.9
WCW Power Hour	1.6/5.8	971,830	1.5/5.4
WWF Mania	1.5/4.5	903,350	1.4/4.2

Week Ending Feb. 7 Rating/Share Total Homes N. Rank

WCW Sat. Night	2.6/5.0	1.61 million	15
Monday Night Raw	2.6/3.7	1.60 million	17
WWF All-American	2.3/5.6	1.43 million	26
WWF Mania	1.7/5.2	1.06 million	
WCW Power Hour	1.6/5.6	990,000	

Week Ending Feb. 14

WWF All-American	2.5/6.0	1.56 million	23
WCW Saturday Night	2.4/4.7	1.49 million	27
WCW Main Event	2.3/3.9	1.42 million	30
WWF Mania	1.5/4.4	934,000	
WCW Power Hour	1.4/5.4	867,000	

Week Ending Feb. 21

Monday Night Raw	2.8/4.2	1.74 million	9
WCW Saturday Night	2.8/5.2	1.73 million	19
WWF All-American	2.1/5.3	1.31 million	37
WCW Main Event	2.0/3.6	1.24 million	40
WCW Power Hour	1.5/5.6	937,000	
WWF Mania	1.4/4.3	870,000	

Week Ending Feb. 28

Monday Night Raw	3.4/5.0	2.12 million	5
WCW Saturday Night	2.6/4.6	1.62 million	23
WCW Main Event	2.2/3.8	1.36 million	34
WWF All-American	1.9/4.9	1.18 million	
WCW Power Hour	1.8/6.3	1.11 million	
WWF Mania	1.2/3.9	742,000	

March Averages Rating/Share Total Homes Feb. Avg.

Monday Night Raw	2.9/4.3	1.79 million	2.9/4.2
WCW Sat. Night	2.5/5.2	1.56 million	2.6/5.0
WCW Main Event	2.3/4.0	1.44 million	2.2/3.8
WWF All-American	2.2/5.5	1.38 million	2.2/5.4
WCW Pro	1.7/6.2	1.07 million	
WCW Power Hour	1.6/5.9	987,000	1.6/5.8
WWF Mania	1.3/3.8	777,500	1.5/4.5

Week Ending Mar. 7

Monday Night Raw	2.8/4.1	1.74 million	11
WCW Main Event	2.6/4.2	1.60 million	19
WCW Sat. Night	2.4/5.0	1.48 million	25
WWF All-American	2.1/5.4	1.31 million	37
WCW Power Hour	1.6/5.9	988,000	
WWF Mania	1.3/3.4	790,000	

Week Ending Mar. 14

Monday Night Raw	2.8/4.2	1.75 million	10
WCW Sat. Night	2.6/5.0	1.61 million	16
WWF All-American	2.0/5.0	1.24 million	36
WCW Main Event	1.9/3.2	1.17 million	
WCW Pro	1.6/6.0	991,000	
WWF Mania	1.3/3.7	804,000	

THE FEBRUARY STORY

After a record January, *Monday Night Raw* returned a bit back to earth with a 2.9 rating, down 14 per cent from the 3.3 of the previous month. *Raw* did pick up a 3.4 to wind up the month but actually lost the first week of the month by a few thousand homes to *WCW Saturday Night*. The Saturday show, which continued its third straight month of steady improvement, increased 8% over January with its 2.6/5.0. The show's peak came Feb. 19, when it finished in a virtual tie with *Raw* with a 2.8, the program's strongest showing since last August.

Ironically, every other cable show posted gains from January. The biggest jump went to *WCW Main Event*, the long-languishing TBS Sunday series, which jumped 22 per cent from January, finishing at 2.2, before the major announcer changes were made in the series. *All-American* gained slightly over January and the two morning shows posted 7 per cent ratings hikes. The top a.m. showing went to *WCW Power Hour* in its next-to-last airing on the 26th with a 1.8/6.3.

ALL-NIGHT GAMBLE

The TBS gamble with a six-hour overnight marathon of the mat apparently worked. *WCW All-Nighter*, which aired Mar. 5 on the superstation, scored a 1.2 rating and 5 per cent share of audience, seen in an estimated 756,000 homes.

Keynoted by the April 1989 Ricky Steamboat-Ric Flair world title match from New Orleans, the ten-bout extravaganza didn't match the numbers of the record-setting *Saved By the Bell* marathon or previous Three Stooges all-nighters, but TBS programmers were pleased with the performance.

Apparently, based on the numbers, TBS will consider making the ring marathon an annual spring event.

FINAL NOTES

The recent series of WWOR-TV reports on the WWF legal woes indicate the company's syndicated shows have slipped from a peak average in the 1986-87 season of 10.2 to a 7 rating....Jim Cornette's *Smoky Mountain Wrestling* local inserts for the Atlanta show of April 2 gave away the finish of the previous night's *Bluegrass Brawl* while the actual show had Bob Caudie continuing to talk about "the important night on April 1st." Boni Blackstone did a rather creative bit of production with commentator Brian Matthews to make the segs make sense....A bit of payback? It used to be the WWF infringing with commercials in local markets on WCW syndicated shows. On the March 28 *Monday Night Raw* in Chicago, local breaks featured a heavy diet of WCW commercials for *Spring Stampede*....Missy Hyatt's plight was fodder for *The Howard Stern Show* on New York and nationally-syndicated radio April 1. Howard treated the matter with humor....Hulk Hogan and Carol Alt appeared on *Larry King Live* April 1 with guest host Kermit the Frog. A caller from Laurel, Md., suggested Ric Flair would beat Hogan because "Flair's the better ring tactician." Hogan became amusingly unglued....Is it just me, or is Hogan beginning to look substantially older than he really is?....Look at those March ratings: can't you picture Dusty Rhodes taking credit for *WCW Pro Wrestling* scoring a 2 rating, the highest morning number in two years?....The free-and-clear feed of *Wrestlemania X* on Telstar 401 March 23 was for insert on British television, where the WWF was beginning its European tour the following weekend....*Radio WWF* is now on Telstar 303, Channel 23, for satellite dish owners, Saturday nights from 9-11 p.m. Eastern time....Remember, the rest of the March ratings and the First Quarter ratings review are on page 7.

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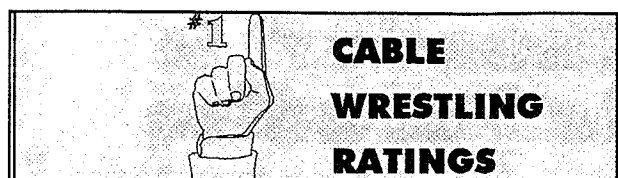
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THE FIRST QUARTER



(Continued from Page 6)

Wk. Ending Mar. 14	Rating/Share	Total Homes	N. Rank
Monday Night Raw	2.8/4.2	1.75 million	13
WCW Sat. Night	2.6/5.0	1.61 million	19
WWF All-American	2.0/5.0	1.24 million	39
WCW Main Event	1.9/3.2	1.18 million	
WCW Pro Wrestling	1.6/6.0	984,000	
WWF Mania	1.3/3.7	774,000	

Wk. Ending Mar. 21	Rating/Share	Total Homes	N. Rank
WCW Saturday Night	2.8/6.0	1.73 million	11
Monday Night Raw	2.6/3.9	1.62 million	17
WWF All-American	2.3/5.7	1.42 million	27
WCW Main Event	2.1/3.4	1.30 million	36
WCW Pro Wrestling	1.6/5.6	979,000	
WWF Mania	1.4/4.3	852,000	

Wk. Ending Mar. 28	Rating/Share	Total Homes	N. Rank
Monday Night Raw	3.3/4.9	2.05 million	N/A
WCW Main Event	2.7/5.2	1.67 million	
WWF All-American	2.5/6.5	1.56 million	
WCW Saturday Night	2.3/4.9	1.44 million	
WCW Pro Wrestling	2.0/6.9	1.23 million	
WWF Mania	1.0/3.3	623,000	

March Special Events

WWF Wrestlemania Special (USA)	3.5/5.0	2.18 million
WCW All-Nighter (TBS)	1.2/5.0	756,000

One cable rating point equals approximately 622,000 homes on USA; 617,000 homes on TBS. Total homes figures are arrived at on quarter-hour averages.

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Monday Night Raw	3.1/4.8	1.90 million	2.9/4.3
WCW Saturday Night	2.5/4.9	1.55 million	2.4/4.8
WWF All-American	2.2/5.3	1.36 million	2.0/5.0
WCW Main Event	2.1/4.0	1.31 million	1.8/3.3
WCW Pro Wrestling	1.7/6.2	1.07 million	N/A
WCW Power Hour	1.5/5.6	947,000	1.4/5.9
WWF Mania	1.4/4.1	860,000	1.3/4.3

The first three months in 1994 mark the first time in recent memory every cable wrestling show has gained in rating and total homes over the previous quarter. *Monday Night Raw*, buoyed by a strong 3.3 average in January stayed attractive enough to finish with a 3.1 for the quarter—the first show in more than two years to end up above a 3 for an entire three-month period.

The biggest gain went to *WCW Main Event*, with two March showings of a 2.6 and a 2.7, which is indicating signs of coming out of ratings doldrums which have lasted for more than three years. *WME* registered a 17 per cent ratings jump over the fourth quarter of '93 to finish at 2.1—not a dynamic number; however, the first time in six quarters the show has registered over a 2.

WCW Saturday Night and *WWF All-American* each gained—with *Saturday Night* up 18 per cent over its weak first quarter of '93 when executive producer Eric Bischoff was taking over the ship in February. *All-American* was up 10 per cent from the fall quarter levels to finish at 2.2.

In the morning, *WCW Power Hour* ended its five-year run on TBS with a 7% hike over the fall. *WWF Mania* had a similar 8% jump.

The bright coming spot for TBS, if early numbers continue, is for the new *WCW Pro Wrestling* (barely more than a reformatted *Power Hour* with Gordon Solie and Dusty Rhodes added to the broadcast team). *Pro* jumped to a 1.7 average in its three-week run at the end of the first quarter and finished with a strong 2.0 in the final week (see more details in March ratings below).

THE MARCH STORY

The relatively weak showing for the edited repeat of the *Wrestlemania* preview special on *Monday Night Raw* hurt the show's overall average during the month but not enough to prevent the show's sixth straight monthly ratings victory and 13th in the last 14.

The 2.9 rating for *Raw* matched its February mark, though the show lost about 40,000 homes from the previous month. The 3.3 for the Lex Luger-Rick Martel headline bout in late March propelled the show back to its most recent average.

WCW Saturday Night and *WWF Mania* registered declines over February ratings averages, though the overall share was up for *Saturday Night*. *All-American* and *Power Hour* held steady over the previous month, though the Saturday morning TBS offering had its final and only offering during the first week.

WCW Main Event, which is showing a slight resurgence, posted its highest monthly average in 22 months, finishing with a 2.3 and finishing in the national top 40 twice during March. The reformatted *Main Event* surged to a 2.7 in the final week of the month, the highest the show has scored since the Ricky Steamboat-Ric Flair *Chi-Town Rumble* world title match was replayed in December 1992.

The early indicators are positive on the new *WCW Pro Wrestling* format on Saturday mornings. TBS registered an average in excess of a million homes for the first three outings and the March 26 edition registered a 2.0 rating, the highest mark for the superstation on Saturday mornings in more than two years.



**THEY
SAID IT!!!**

The Best of March

1. Jim Cornette, *Smoky Mt.*: "My mother wanted to watch wrestling on TV when she was in Atlanta. She looked in *TV Guide* and saw WCW and she knew that wasn't wrestling." 2. Vince McMahon, *Monday Night Raw*, "Any man who wears a ponytail ought to have his life examined." 3. Bobby Heenan, *WCW Main Event*: "Gene, you're hardly the spitting image of Don King." 4. McMahon, *USWA*: "A Memphian is another name for an amphibian which can keep his head above water." 5. Cornette, *Raw*: "Earthquake looks like he got behind on his payments for his Nordic Trac." 6. Eddie Gilbert, *USWA*: "Jerry Lawler is just like Bill Clinton. He takes from the people and he fееееееels your pain." 7. Dusty Rhodes, *WCW Pro*: "Kevin Sullivan learned all this nerve stuff from Booda Dean in Singapore. Gawdon knows all about this Tree of Woe and one-eyed monster stuff." 8. Rush Limbaugh, *Rush Limbaugh Show*: "Anybody ever hear of Missy Hyatt?...she could probably say her entire job is sexual harassment." 9. Limbaugh, *RLS*: "I'm sure she (Missy) has got great managing skills. I'm sure she handles all of the accounts of the wrestlers in her tent with great aplomb and great strategy. I'm sure she puts together some fine contracts." 10. Cornette, *Monday Night Raw*: "Louisville should have been in the Final Four. Roddy Piper must have refereed their game against Michigan."

11. McMahon/Cornette, *MNR*: (V) "Luger is a mesomorph of a physical specimen." (JC) "What does his religion have to do with it?" 12. McMahon/Cornette, *MNR*: (V) "Let's stay out of politics. Let's not make fools out of the people who serve our federal government." (JC) "I don't have to do that. They do a good enough job of that on their own." 13. Cornette, *MNR*: "Being the greatest wrestler in the Hart family is like being the nicest guy in a prison. It's not really an honor." 14. Burt Reynolds, *Wrestlemania X*: "This was the second-best feeling I've ever had." 15. Larry Zbyszko/Gordon Solie, *WCW Pro*: (LZ) "Dusty bleeds cowboy boots and chaps when he sees his kid in the ring." (GS) "Indeed." 16. Hulk Hogan/Caller, *Larry King Live*: (Caller) "I think Flair is a better ring tactician." (HH) "Hey, dude, I thought you knew what you were talking about! I thought you were a Hulkamaniac."

Strongest Comments

1. Missy Hyatt, *WXIA-TV*: "Missy Hyatt's character was always the blonde bimbo type and when the cameras cut, that's not me. I'm a real person inside." 2. Melissa Smith, *WXIA-TV*, on Missy Hyatt: "She acts like a bimbo, so what can I say?" 3. Jesse Ventura, *WCW Worldwide*: "I am the greatest color commentator in the history of wrestling." 4. Steve Beverly, *Union vs. Simon Fraser*, *NAIA Women's National Championship* tournament: "(Joe) Winfield has called so few fouls, this action under the basket is like watching World Championship Wrestling. They're throwing brainbusters under there!"

And the Rest....

BEST INTERVIEW: McMahon, *USWA*, March 12.

BEST ACTRESS: Hyatt in tears on *WXIA-TV*.

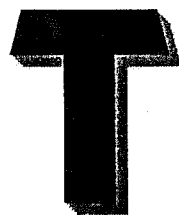
WORST ACTOR: Hogan, *Thunder in Paradise*.

COMEBACK AWARD: Gordon Solie, *WCW Pro*.

BOO AWARD: *WCW media newsletter*, for tasteless comparisons of Cactus Jack's ear incident to John Wayne Bobbitt or Vincent Van Gogh. These people have absolutely no shame. And they have the audacity to wonder why they receive criticism.

Review

"Thunder" Is No Paradise



ime was when every human being alive was trying to host a game show. Then every person in your neighborhood was doing a pilot for a talk show. Now, there's the light action-adventure series.

Occasionally, a *Star Trek: the Next Generation* will surface where scripts and characterizations are treated with loving care. *Thunder in Paradise* does not remotely fit into that category.

Thunder fits somewhere in between the Sharon Sidello-Ole Anderson mininovie of Sid Vicious and Vader blowing up the Sting-Davey Boy Smith boat and the old Gerry Anderson *Stingray* series, produced in "Supermarionation." That's how juvenile it is.

After viewing the first episode, I don't even see how the kids can buy the plot. The two-hour movie debut centered around Hogan's Hurricane character rescuing a bartender (Carol Alt in a role as believable as Missy Hyatt negotiating contracts for her wrestlers) and a nine-year-old. The child may have been the best actor on the show.

This reminds me of *Knight Rider*, where the car was the star of the show. Only in this one, the primary vehicle is Hurricane's boat. In a showdown, the car is the better actor.

One has to wonder if the talented Chris Lemmon and Patrick Macnee had to do this one for the money. Then, again, why has the elegant Christopher Plummer lowered himself to do *Counterstrike*. Lemmon, who was delightful in the Fox comedy *Duet*, is relegated to being the good buddy of Hogan who gets much less camera time. Macnee, in a role similar to that of Leo G. Carroll in *The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, looks as if he'd like to find Diana Rigg to put some life into the scripts as they did in that mid-sixties classic, *The Avengers*.

In the third episode, where Sting (Steve Borden) shows up as a villain, the closing fight scene was so poorly choreographed, one would believe it was staged for two first-match jobbers in their rookie year. Sting had better matches during his early career in Memphis.

As for Hogan, after four movie disasters, one would think he would get the message to stick to wrestling. His acting prowess is enough to make the adult Jerry Mathers qualify for an Emmy nomination. Missy Hyatt did better acting in her recent interview with *WXIA-TV*. If Hogan walked through the part, you might find some hope for improvement. The sad part is he appears to be really trying to act. Hogan should know his limitations. He was out-acted by both Kermit the Frog and Oscar the Grouch on *Larry King Live*. At least Alt has a nice smile.

For redeeming virtues, the music and outdoor scenery is decent and if Jimmy Hart could be given a bit more natural comic material than some of the awful scripted stuff here, maybe some moments would be tolerable.

With a heavy pre-debut campaign and the help of a free weekly push on WCW cable and syndicated programs, the ratings for the first two episodes are proving quality matters little. The frightening prospect: maybe the kids are getting it. **Matwatch '94 Rating** (on a scale of 0-to-10): 1.5, for the music and photography.

Lance

Memphis Announcing Legend Enters Hall of Fame

He walked back into the studio of WMC-TV the morning of March 5. It was as if a reliable old shoe had been waiting in the closet for the foot to slip inside. The audience stood as the legend returned after five years away from his former home. Lance Russell's return to *USWA Championship Wrestling*, if but for one week, was enough to make a veteran fan feel like a kid again. Two nights later, Lance was inducted into the first class of the Mid-South Coliseum Hall of Fame.

The evening before his return to the old studio, Lance reflected on his wrestling mike career which spans five decades. As a double issue bonus for *Matwatch '94* subscribers, we share that interview with you with a hope of reviving fond memories for you who have followed Memphis wrestling in the era when Lance made it a weekly treasure.

MATWATCH: First, what does it mean to you, in the kind of career you've had to have it, in a sense, culminate in being named to this hall of fame?

LANCE: Well, I think the fact that all of this has taken place in Memphis, which is where the roots of my background in wrestling are and where I've seen all of the things happen in Memphis, it absolutely has got to be one of the most thrilling things that's ever happened to me, no question about it. I've appreciated a couple of other Announcer of the Year things from the fans. But this is just like the rolling all of that up into one. It really is a thrill.

MATWATCH: Why do you think through the years and, in particular, not just for the people who live there but for a number of fans—when videotape became convenient enough to swap with people who didn't get the Memphis show in their area....why do you think that show became so beloved with so many people who follow wrestling?

LANCE: Well, it's difficult for me to make a judgment on what the other shows were like at that time but I can tell you that, since my experience with WCW—I'm not putting it as being bad, I enjoyed my four years there and all, but there was a freedom here and a looseness and a spirit of fun, I guess is the only word.

There was a spirit here that was different from my time in WCW. It was so regimented and put together like a business in WCW. It just didn't have the same kind of spontaneity, the same kind of flavor to it. I think that may very well have been the reason why it was unique in America. Everywhere I went with WCW, I had people come up and recognize me and say—and I knew we didn't have a show in a lot of these places. But they were trading tape and they had seen the Memphis show and it was kind of a prized possession to them.

MATWATCH: In my teaching (in Jackson, Tn., near Memphis), a number of college students at 18, 19, 20 years old to this day drop by to find out what's going on in wrestling and they still consider Lance Russell as Memphis wrestling. Even though you don't do that show now, so many of the young people I come into contact with consider you the legend. That has to have

some kind of a heartwarming effect to you.

LANCE: You don't know how special it is. It's particularly true, that feeling, since I've retired. I've been back in Memphis—and bear in mind, it's been five years since I've been on local Memphis television—but I am just absolutely astounded at the number of people who still recognize me. You know how it is in television. They forget in a hurry.

Particularly since I'm away from it now, it means that much more to me. I don't have any explanation except to say I'm very flattered and very happy that the conditions exist that way.

MATWATCH: Last week on the show on the "Memphis Memories" segment, they devoted it to a brief thumbnail history of studio wrestling in Memphis. What kind of feeling did you have when you looked back and saw those different fashions and hairstyles you had?

LANCE: You had to mention that, Steve! I tell you, Dave (Brown) and I talked about this. When we look at the length of hair we had at the time. When we look at the leisure suits that we're wearing and the gold necklaces, frankly, it's embarrassing.

I finally have a great deal more tolerance for my grandchildren now when I see these long shorts that these guys are wearing in basketball and out on the street, I have a great deal of tolerance. I can assure you: that, too, will pass.

Thank goodness that's what happened to all this stuff we see back on these old tapes. It's a hoot, it really is. We get a little embarrassed at it sometimes but I've got to tell you, I wouldn't take anything for having been there.

MATWATCH: People such as us who analyze wrestling to the quick of the fingernail tend to forget that, for it to be successful with the fans, it still has to be fun. Out of curiosity—as one who's watched it change through the years—has wrestling lost its sense of fun, overall.

LANCE: Yes, I think it has, Steve. I really hate to say that but if I'm honest about it, I have to say, yes, it has. We've talked about this and I do have an objection to where so many of the fans are going to matches, like they are critiquing it to do a

(Continued on Page 10)

Lance: Hall of Famer

(Continued from Page 9)

Roundtable Review. I love the Roundtable Review (the post-pay-per-view analysis on The Real Wrestling Hotline hosted by Lance) and it's the greatest exchange all of us have during the month when we get together and actually talk wrestling like that. But the thing I'm trying to say is: it used to be that it never entered anybody's mind, in terms of workrate, or anything like that. When they're sitting they're analyzing it for that, I think they're losing part of the fun. They know whether they're having fun, or not, and they know whether they see a guy who's a Jabroni and doesn't belong in the ring. It's pretty simple in terms of black-and-white that way. I just really think a lot of it has been lost. The approach of it from the promotion end has lost some of that. It comes from being a big business. It lost some of the spirit. That's one of the things I like about this "legends" thing, the *Monday Memories*. I'm not going to tell you it's not being promoted to draw a crowd but the encouraging indication is they cut, for instance, the general admission prices back down to \$3. The prices are really about a buck below all over.

What I'm saying is: the spirit is, from the promotion is let's get as many people there for the celebration as we can and that made me feel kinda good.

MATWATCH: To be called, as you were last week, a "legend of legends," and to have an opportunity to have your work measured as among the best ever—what does that mean personally to you?

LANCE: Well, I feel like it is a recognition of the time that I put in and not just the time aspect of it, but it's something that I really love. People have said to me along the way, "Don't you get tired of doing that? Seems like you've been doing it forever." Except for an occasional Saturday when you have to work when you're not feeling good, it was a labor of love. Obviously, it's been very good to me and I appreciate that aspect of it. But I see the induction as just kind of a culmination of the effort that went into it. That may not be the most altruistic statement in the world but that's what it means to me.

MATWATCH: My students, when they come around to talk wrestling, will invariably get around to a Lance Russell imitation they remember when they were growing up, usually something along the lines of, "Now COME ON, JIMMY! You've GOTTA get outta here!"

LANCE: I love it. I am very surprised when this happens but that is the most flattering thing in the world that people think enough to even remember who you are. I wish I could be more immodest about it, but it's the truth.

MATWATCH: After seeing the "history of TV wrestling" vignette, so many memories were rekindled: you separating Jimmy Hart and Andy Kaufman, you trading insults with Jerry Lawler. Some of these are now considered classics. Do you have all of these on tape?

LANCE: Well, Steve, I'm glad they weren't depending on me

for the highlights. This is one question I was probably asked more during the time I was on the road for WCW than any other. I'd be in Detroit, or Boston, or St. Louis—places I never dreamed people had seen our show and they'd ask, "Don't you enjoy going back through and looking at your old tapes of these things?" They always looked stunned when I told them I don't have them. For one thing, videotapes didn't really become widespread until the early '80s and when they first were in the stores, they were pretty expensive, around \$20 apiece or more.

But I'd have to say the main reason we didn't tape these things at home is: we didn't know we were doing anything special when we were doing them. We were just producing a television show and trying to build a crowd for Monday night. We had no idea at the time that newsletters and tape collectors were going to become a big market. Considering the reaction from the fans around the country, I wish I had some of these tapes now. But, just like any business you're in, when we were doing our work, we just didn't realize it was something special that fans were going to place a value on.

MATWATCH: Lance, back in late 1983 and early '84, Vince McMahon began his national push and a number of the Memphis stars between that period and 1985 began their migration to the WWF. People like Jimmy Hart and Randy Savage, to begin with. It changed the face of the business. In the couple of years leading up to McMahon's expansion—did anyone in the Memphis group sense what was going to happen in wrestling?

LANCE: I'd like to tell you we were that clairvoyant but, to tell you the truth, we weren't. We heard a lot of people saying Vince was going to *kill* his own business, his father's business. Nobody thought he had enough money to hold out doing what he did. And, to be honest, a lot of people believed fans wouldn't respond in the same fashion if they weren't able to go to their local arena every week and have the local wrestlers. No, it really crept up on us and a lot of folks, in the beginning, sensed it was a big gamble that probably wouldn't work. I guess we were wrong on that one.

MATWATCH: As were many others. You're going back tomorrow (Mar. 5) to do the WMC show to help build *Memphis Memories*. What kind of emotion will you feel when you walk back into that studio?

LANCE: Steve, it's hard to describe. As many years as I did this, I have a feeling tomorrow is going to be awfully special in a way I can't really describe. Seeing all of those friendly faces and being there again with Dave (Brown). It's going to be a lot of fun and, I'm sure, bring back a lot of memories.

MATWATCH: Any chance you'd consider coming back to do this again on a regular basis?

LANCE: I don't think so. I've retired and Aud (Lance's wife, Audrey) and I just don't want to be tied down to a weekly schedule. But for something like another "legends" show, I wouldn't mind. It would be fun.

Corny, Titan Cut Super Deal

(Continued from Back Cover)

"Those no-brainers are running the company so bad, they even make Jim Herd look good," Cornette cracked. "At the rate they're going, Missy Hyatt could wind up owning them."

An unusual aspect to the complicated Titan-Cornette deal is, rather than Cornette receiving advertising revenue sharing from his syndicated show, he will have an option to gain equity in the Titan corporation, not to exceed 10 per cent, according to reports.

McMahon has negotiated two clauses which Cornette conceded on the Smoky Mountain series. ESPN/ABC sportscaster Dick Vitale has agreed to make four appearances during the 1994-95 season as a color commentator with host Bob Caudle.

"Can you imagine the intensity we'll have if Vitale ever interviews Cornette?" asked McMahon.

"All I can figure is we'll be hearing, 'COR, bay-bee,' every time there's a countout," Cornette quipped. "Or if I get on the ring apron during a match, he'll probably be hollering, 'D-Q, bay-bee, D-Q.' I'll just tell the referee Dicky V wants to go to the Dairy Queen, bay-bee."

Heyman to Host 'Shenanigans'

NEW YORK—Veteran wrestling personality and television producer Paul Heyman will reassume the Paul E. Dangerously persona for a new children/teen game show this fall on Nickelodeon.

Based on reports in *Mediaweek*, Heyman has been tapped to emcee *Shenanigans '94*, an updated version of the 1963-65 ABC game show which features contestants between 10-14 playing on a living game board.

The original show incorporated elements of the CBS series *Video Village* and several popular Milton Bradley board games.

"This edition will be updated into the '90s. We'll probably borrow some elements from *Double Dare*, some of the jello and whip cream," says Heyman, "and we'll have a couple of video game elements."

Nintendo will be a regular sponsor of *Shenanigans '94*, which will air from 4:30-5 p.m. (ET) beginning Sept. 12 on Nickelodeon.

"One thing's for sure," says Heyman. "No wrestlers will be on this show." Taping will begin this summer at Nickelodeon Studios in Florida.

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The correct volume numbers for this special double issue of *Matwatch '94* are 3 and 4, not 4 and 5 as are listed on some pages of this issue.

McMahon also wants to finally bring to the home screen an identity to the character of Gladys Cornette, Jim's mother, who has always been an unseen reference.

"Mrs. Cornette has been an identity much like Charlie on *Charlie's Angels*, Dolly Parton's husband Carl and the wife of Pete Porter (Harry Morgan) on the old series *December Bride*," said McMahon. "When Gladys was finally embodied as the actress Cara Williams, she came alive on the old *Pete and Gladys* series. We think after so many years, the same thing should happen with Mrs. Cornette."

Cornette, for his part, denied his real-life mother would play the part. "Mama took me to lot of wrestling matches before I was old enough to go on my own," said Cornette. "But she's not going to tackle this one."

McMahon indicated he had initiated conversations with actresses Jaye P. Morgan and the veteran star of *Leave It to Beaver* and *The New Leave It to Beaver*, Barbara Billingsley but neither has made the commitment.

"We're not in any rush for this but we would like to introduce the role of Mrs. Cornette at *Summer Slam*," said McMahon.

However, McMahon abruptly ended the briefing when questions turned to his legal difficulties, headed for a scheduled trial on alleged illegal steroid distribution charges next month.

Cornette remained to address reporter's questions on an informal basis after McMahon left.

"It's true. I once said I'd be dead before I would work up here. But these people are smart enough to realize when they're onto a good thing," said Cornette. "We're fixed for the next seven years unless Vince's entire company falls apart....and somehow, I think he's going to survive the trial."

Cornette could not resist the temptation for a final insult.

"This whole thing may seem to be a bit outlandish, just like a few years back when the rumor was started in a special edition of a newsletter that I was joining the pro bowlers' tour. I had to listen to calls on my answering machine about that one for three months," said Cornette. "Well, if you bozos believe what's on this page, you're just as big a bunch of suckers as you were when that happened three years ago. Why? Because everything you have read in *Matwatch '94* on page 11 and page 12 is one big, inspired APRIL FOOL!!! Do you hear me again? The last two pages of this edition of *Matwatch '94* are an APRIL FOOL!!!

"The only thing I'll add to this is WCW wishes everything on the first four pages of this issue was an APRIL FOOL," said Cornette.

SMW Joins Lineup, Corny Gets Equity Interest

Cornette Cuts Super Deal With Titan Sports

STAMFORD CT—In a deal unprecedented since the World Wrestling Federation's national expansion in 1984, Smoky Mountain Wrestling president Jim Cornette has closed a seven-year deal with the legally-troubled WWF parent company, Titan Sports. As part of the deal, Cornette's *Smoky Mountain Wrestling* will replace *Wrestling Spotlight* as one of the three shows in the WWF stable of syndicated shows and Cornette receives a \$1 million infusion of cash as part of a talent development deal with Titan.

Titan Sports, in exchange, will have exclusive rights to Cornette's services as a performer and behind-the-scenes creative talent through April 2000. The million-dollar development pact gives Titan first choice on any new wrestlers or characters Cornette develops within the *Smoky Mountain* organization. The deal also places SMW as a direct subsidiary of the WWF, which virtually guarantees its survival, barring a financial or legal collapse of Titan Sports, Inc.

At a joint news conference at Titan headquarters in Stamford April 1, Cornette and WWF chief operating officer Vincent K. McMahon Jr., Cornette called the deal a "win-win" proposition.

"Now, Vince and I may get into it on the air but you can never say he doesn't know how to turn a buck," said Cornette. "He's realized there has to be a new training ground for wrestling because he either bought up, ran off, or scared off every territory except for mine and Jerry Jarrett's and WCW is just a bunch of spendthrift idiots."

McMahon was equally buzzing at the deal. "As many years as it took us to get Jim Cornette into our organization, we feel this is going to be worth every penny of our investment," said McMahon. "Behind that screaming and those one-liners is one of the most brilliant minds in the business and we're proud to know he will be with the Titan family through the rest of this century."

"You should be, Vince," Cornette quipped, through the laughter of reporters.

The surprise news conference was called after a reported three months of negotiation. One sticking point was Cornette demanded to retain creative control over the Smoky Mountain unit on any shows exclusively within his southeastern territory.

Speculation centered on Cornette assuming a title as vice president of regional development, which would include developing a series of three-to-five secondary promotions similar to Smoky Mountain, but McMahon was quiet on the prospect.

Perhaps the most stunning aspect of the deal involved the dropping of *Wrestling Spotlight* as part of the WWF syndie package and replacing it with *Smoky Mountain Wrestling*. The unprecedented move incorporates an outside production for the first time in the WWF syndication rotation—but reportedly, the production costs will be lower for McMahon than continuing the in-house match repackaging in *Spotlight*; yet, Cornette will get improved production values for his shows.

"I was telling Vince, he's beginning to tape some of his shows in little bitty high school gyms that look as bad as some of the ones we tape in, so people probably won't be able to tell much difference," said Cornette. "But maybe our shows won't look now like they're being lighted with power from the Energizer bunny."

In a relatively conservative navy blue double-breasted blazer and no tennis racket, Cornette elaborated on what he calls his "vindication" for his 1990 departure from WCW.

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